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ABSTRACT

This paper includes a functional model for upgrading the effectiveness of inservice training for school administrators. It is based on the writer's contention that most inservice programs for administrators do not relate to the leadership concerns of each participant, skills developed in those programs often are not applied to the participant's back-home school setting, the leadership behavicr of the administrator is a key factor in stimulating or inhibiting meaningful change in the school, and a narrow focus--the participant's interests and skills--has been the thrust of most inservice programs rather than the multifaceted aspect of providing effective leadership for the institutions served by the participating administrators. The writing focuses on the school administrator as a barrier or a gateway to change in schools, some techniques of organizing leadership inservice education, the dynamic relationship between the administrator's inservice training and the school he serves, and the Leadership Inservice Education Model (LIEM) for upgrading the effectiveness of inservice activities. The need for school systems to place a higher priority on inservice training for the administrator as a key to prcgram improvement is emphsized. (Author/IRT)

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MAXIMIZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP INSERVICE EDUCATION: AN OPERATIONAL MODEL

by
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MAXIMIZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP INSERVICE EDUCATION

Joseph C. Sommerville*

School administrators often participate in inservice training programs designed to upgrade the quality of their performance. Resources--offered through these programs--frequently do not relate to the leadership concerns in each participant's unique school situation. Many programs are unrelated to today's problems,[1] and the skills developed through them are not applied or even applicable in the various school settings. Barriers that appear to block the "back-home" implementation of many of the skills and techniques introduced in regional, state and national inservice meetings for administrators seem insurmountable. The net result is "business as usual." An alternative is therefore offered in this paper which focuses on: (1) the administrator as the key figure in stimulating change in schools, (2) the dynamic relationship between the administrator's inservice training and the uniqueness of the school (s)he serves, and (3) a model for upgrading the leadership effectiveness of inservice education.

Relating the Administrator and Change to Inservice Education

The school administrator (superintendents, directors, coordinators, and especially building principals) is the key figure in stimulating changes in the institution since (s)he is usually the perceived leader and is charged with the leadership responsibility. Consequently, hereafter in this writing,

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the terms administrator and leader will be used interchangeably. The administrator's leadership behavior tends to influence the cooperation of his/her subordinates in efforts to deal with school problems. Attention should therefore be given to the multifaceted aspects of providing effective leadership. A well planned and efficiently operated inservice education program is suggested as one useful approach for upgrading the effectiveness of leadership in schools.

Generally inservice programs have been focused on the participant's skills and the introduction of new techniques. A broader focus seems warranted and attention must be given to the development of cognitive, affective, and interpersonal skills of the administrator as they relate to the objectives of each school. Those objectives as well as the identified needs and concerns of each school must be a determining factor in planning, organizing and implementing inservice activities. The administrator must not only possess skills but also (s)he must be able to relate them to people in an organizational setting if (s)he is to stimulate meaningful change.

Most leadership inservice education activities I've experienced as a participant, focus on specific information, skills and techniques one may use. Success is measured by feedback--often verbal--received from the participating administrators. A very, very few have attempted to assess effectiveness of the program through communication with those who are the ultimate focus of the inservice activity--the subordinates of the participants. Halpin[2] asserts that the dependable index of a leader's change in behavior is measured by his associates' perceptions rather than by his own verbalization or analysis. It follows, then, that caution should be exercised in the use of the trainees' statements as indices of the success of training.

Since schools exist in various socioeconomic settings and each is somewhat unique, leadership behavioral acts, effective with one group may be ineffective with a different group. Thus, if school improvement is the ultimate objective of leadership inservice education, those programs which can relate a participant's training to the problems and concerns of the group (s)he serves will be of greatest value.[3] The relationship between the inservice activities and the group served by the administrator must be one in which the reactions of the client system--the group, school or other institution under the leadership of the participant--influences, if not determines, the nature of the leadership training. Conceptually, the client system refers to that which is to be changed or improved.[4]

Specific objectives for the leader's involvement in the inservice program must be clearly delineated. Spending adequate time to clarify the problem[5] (including those factors which hamper the leader's positive relationship with his/her client system) is one of the most fruitful aspects of the inservice process. Skill in influencing change--upsetting the status quo while concurrently maintaining an effective communication link with various school related groups--is essential for effective administrative leadership.[6] The development of such skills should therefore be a major thrust of leadership inservice education for administrators.

Upgrading Leadership Inservice Education: A Model

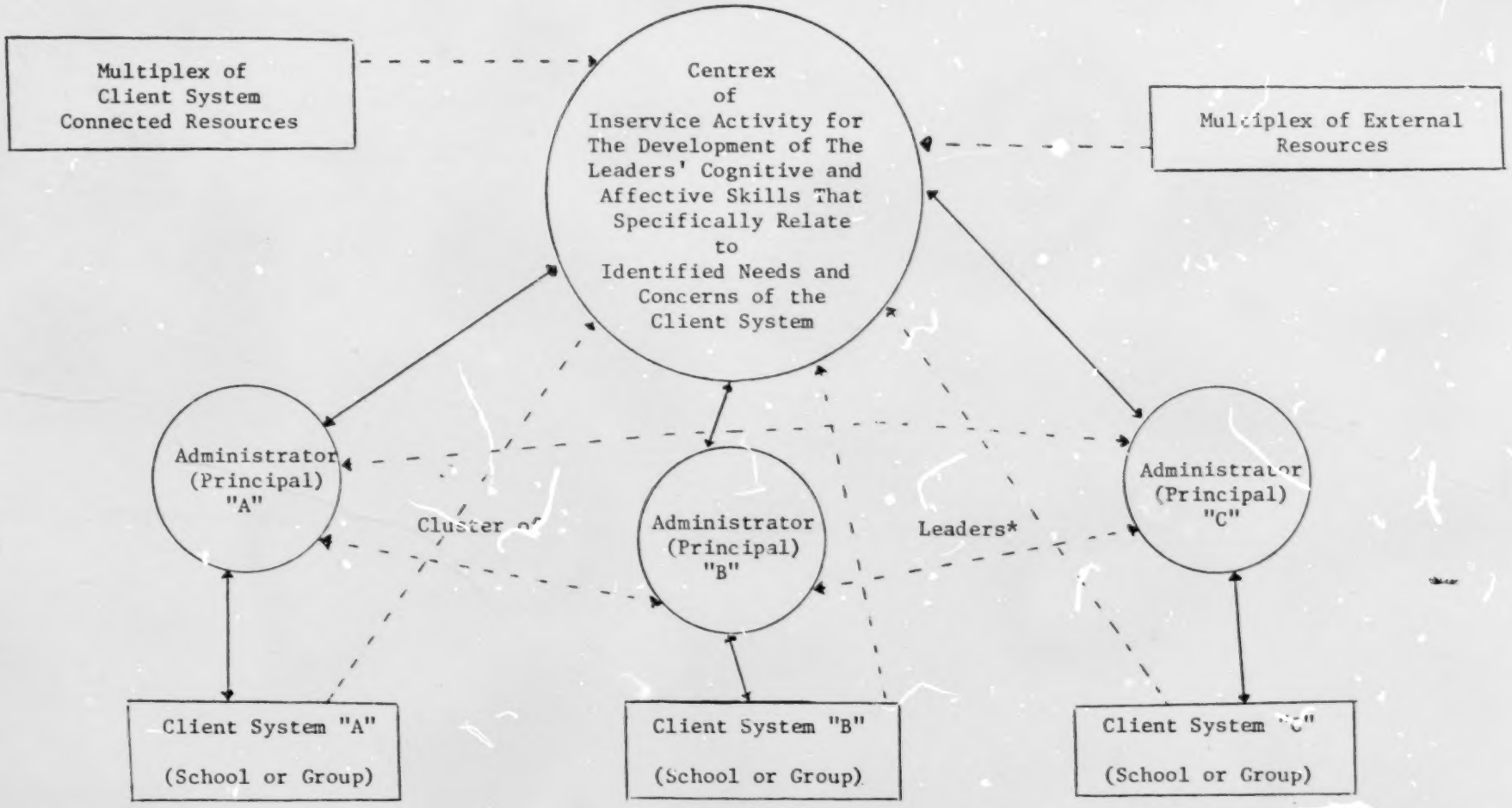
The first question raised by many school authorities, when the idea of inservice education for administrators is advanced, is cost. Can the system afford it? For those who wish to maintain the status quo, the question seems appropriate; but for those who are seeking to improve schools and upgrade

opportunities for students in a rapidly changing environment, the question must be a secondary consideration. Many skills and techniques gained by school administrators of yesteryear are no longer adequate for providing leadership in addressing and resolving today's problems. A more basic and fundamental question should be can a district afford not to promote inservice education designed to provide enlightened leadership for more effectively dealing with its unique problems? Most school districts need to reexamine their priorities and focus additional attention on the key to changes in schools--administrators and other designated leaders--if they wish to make progress in the continuing struggle to improve educational opportunities for the students they serve.

The Leadership Inservice Education Model (LIEM) shown in Figure 1--based on numerous experiences I have had as a staff development specialist, coordinator and consultant for leadership inservice education activities--is offered as a guide for districts or a combination of school systems interested in maximizing the effectiveness of inservice education for school leaders. Such a model may be implemented through cooperative efforts in either a relatively large school system; several small systems; regional, university or state educational agencies; professional organizations such as those for elementary or secondary principals, curriculum coordinators, superintendents or other groups of leaders.

In LIEM, the Centrex of Inservice Activity is the center for inservice training and it provides for the coordination of ongoing inservice leadership development. A competent coordinator and support staff for this ongoing inservice activity are crucial. The coordinator must be able to relate to people and manage resources effectively. The Multiplex of Client System

Figure 1
LEADERSHIP INSERVICE EDUCATION MODEL (LIEM)


Multiplex of Client System Connected Resources
Centrex of Inservice Activity for The Development of The Leaders' Cognitive and Affective Skills That Specifically Relate to Identified Needs and Concerns of the Client System
Multiplex of External Resources
Administrator (Principal) "A"
Cluster of
Administrator (Principal) "B"
Leaders*
Administrator (Principal) "C"
Client System "A" (School or Group)
Client System "B" (School or Group)
Client System "C" (School or Group)

*Each cluster consists of two to five administrators; triads are recommended. The diagram shows only one of "x" number of clusters; however, from three to five clusters, nine to fifteen participants, represent an ideal organization. Various adaptations of this prototype are feasible and may be warranted contingent upon the size, interests and concerns of the group.

- - - - - → Supplemental Flow of Information and Resources -- Used to Identify and Clarify Problems and Concerns and to Facilitate the Processes of Attaining Specified Objectives.

←——→ Direct Flow of Information Regarding Identified Needs and Concerns and the Applicability of Specific Skills and Approaches to the Individual Client System -- A two-way Ongoing Interaction.

←- - - - → Facilitative and Mutually Supportive Interaction for Testing, Refining and Improving Individual Approaches, Skills, and Techniques for More Effectively Relating to the Client System -- A Two-way Flow of Informations and Reactions.

Connected Resources encompasses those groups and individuals who have a direct relationship to the client system and the administrator's leadership functions. Normally these will include administrators at higher or lower levels in the hierarchy of the school system, parents, teachers, students, various community groups, nonteaching personnel, and school organizations such as the P.T.A., and those for teaching and non-teaching employees. The Multiplex of External Resources refers to resources which may facilitate the development of needed skills and techniques for providing more effective leadership, including professional trainers for specific skills, university professors, educators from other school areas, materials for role playing, simulations, case studies, visitations, etc. The Cluster of Leaders, a subgroup of two to five participants, provides an opportunity for the administrator to interact, test tentative plans and strategies, get feedback regarding his/her approaches to problems and develop and analyze individual skills and techniques while reacting to problems and concerns of other educators with similar goals. The client system, of course, is the target of the leaders training.

Universities and other agencies engaged in training school leaders frequently use very valuable skill development techniques which may contribute to the effectiveness of the Centrex of Activity. While simulations, case analyses, etc. are usually important aspects of inservice workshop activities, I have observed--as coordinator of several inservice programs for administrators--that participants become more involved and exhibit greater interest and enthusiasm for a process when their personal and professionally related concerns are utilized as the problematic situation.

To facilitate the process of relating to the participant's individual problematic situation, the Centrex of Inservice Activity should be specifically linked with the group served by the leader. Attention must be given to that link since measures of effectiveness of inservice activities in the centrex need to be focused on the target group or the client system rather than--as is the usual practice--the reactions of inservice program participants. Procedure for acquiring those measures should be developed. For example, aspects of the school climate changes which relate to the principal's behavior may be measured by an assessment of teacher perceptions before and after the principal's participation in the series of inservice activities. I agree with Brown's[6] statement that emphasis in inservice education should be placed on learning rather than teaching and training. However, I am convinced that inservice education needs to be carried a step further to place emphasis on learning as it relates to the client system served by the learner. An ongoing line of communication between the inservice activities in the centrex and client system must therefore be established.

Perhaps the most gratifying experiences in inservice education for administrators are those which come from interaction with one's peers or with responsible leaders who are confronted with similar problems. Sharing experiences, analyzing problems of common interest, getting feedback from those who function at a parallel level in the hierarchy of the school organizational structure is usually a supportive, stimulative, and valuable experience for administrators. Our analysis of evaluations, received from participants in leadership inservice programs, indicates that this experience is among the most important and beneficial for the practitioners. Through the organization of clusters of leaders, LIEM provides a facilitating structure for this kind of interaction as an essential ongoing phase of the inservice process.

Planning and implementing the model requires flexibility in relating to the dynamics of an ongoing inservice operation. Strategic and tactful use of sub-groups, informal and formal ogranizations as well as individuals who may aid in the attainment of institutional goals, is an integral part of the process of improving inservice education. A facilitative environment and clearly delineated channels for the involvement of significant groups are important aspects in the effective operation of LIEM.

Maximizing Effectiveness

There can be little doubt that maximum effectiveness is contingent upon many variables. Each system must, therefore, carefully assess the dynamics of its school setting and apply the principles herein discussed to that unique situation. LIEM is offered as an alternative and no claim is made that it is a panacea for all school inservice problems. However, LIEM provides a functional approach for meeting many rapidly changing leadership requirements. Its major focus is the mastery and practical application of relevant leadership skills.

In summary, a well planned and executed leadership inservice education program provides the opportunity for the leader to upgrade his/her interpersonal relationships and administrative skills and techniques within the environment in which they are to be used. Thus, upgrading the effectiveness of inservice education requires that:

1. The impact of the leader's training on the group he/she serves be assessed and that the results be used as indices of effectiveness,
2. Program planning and evaluation be continuously based on specifically identified problems, needs and concerns of the client group,
3. Inservice education programs be an ongoing aspect of school operation--unlike the usual hit or miss inservice workshops and conferences,

4. Barriers and gateways to the achievement of specified objectives be identified and that resources be marshalled and directed toward the removal of barriers and the effective use of the gateways for goal attainment,

5. Inservice program activity be focused on affective as well as cognitive skill development giving special attention to processes in relating to formal and informal organizations, and

6. Significant publics--parents, non teaching personnel, students, militants, teachers, and civic groups--as well as others who may facilitate goal attainment be involved in the inservice activities.

Upgrading the effectiveness of leadership inservice education is a complex operation. The effective utilization of skills, strategies, planning and evaluation, and the maintenance of a dynamic equilibrium between leadership skill development and target group perceptions are important factors in the process. Since the administrator as the designated leader may facilitate desirable change that may evolve from the inservice education of other personnel, he/she is a key in program improvement. His/her behavior, both overtly and covertly, is usually influential. Thus, if meaningful changes in schools are to be actualized, a higher priority must be given to leadership inservice education--a critical factor in the continuing attempts to upgrade education in schools of today.

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